

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority Periodic Report of the Chairman on Authority Matters

Performance

1. There have been 8399 incidents in 2016/17 and there is a downward trend over the last three years. False Alarm Good Intent was the most prevalent incident type in 2016/17, followed by Primary Fires. In 2015/16 False Alarm Good Intent was the most prevalent incident type followed by Small Fires.

There have been 564 Accidental Dwelling Fires during 2016/17 which is 49 fewer incidents than 2015/16. The three year trend continued and was affected by the low numbers experienced during 2014/15.

There is an upward trend in the number of Safe and Well Visits delivered over the last three years. During 2016/17, 27,816 visits were delivered, which is 2,357 fewer visits than the year before. In December 2016 HFRCs were replaced by Safe and Well visits covering a wider range of vulnerabilities and taking longer to complete. There has also been increasing emphasis given to vulnerable households and those identified as at greater risk (Gold, Silver and Bronze).

The number of Accidental Dwelling Fires experienced in Gold, Silver or Bronze households has decreased by 37 in 2016/17 compared to the previous year.

5,021 Safe and Well visits were delivered to priority Gold, Silver or Bronze households in 2016/17, which is 832 more than in the previous year.

There have been 19 injuries and 4 deaths during 2016/17, which is the same number of deaths and 5 more injuries than in the year 2015/16.

Response to the Consultation on the Police and Crime Commissioner's Business Case

2. The Authority held a Members event on Friday 11 August 2017 which gave them the opportunity to meet with the Police and Crime Commissioner, his Chief Executive and the Chief Constable to discuss the PCC's Business Case which contained proposals for the future governance of the Fire and Rescue Authority. As a consequence of that meeting a draft response to the Consultation was drawn up based on the views and comments expressed in the meeting, to subsequently be considered by a special meeting of the full Authority and, if approved, submitted as its formal response.

The Authority held the special meeting on 24 August 2017 to consider the draft response for approval and submission, subject to any further comments or additions they may deem appropriate. Amendments were made to the response following the comments made by Members with regard to working with the Ambulance Service and consideration of the application from the PCC with regard to the Representation Model. The response from the Authority was amended and duly submitted to Mel Research.

At the special Authority meeting Members had commented upon the timescale of the consultation. They were content that the Business Case had been properly scrutinised and challenged and that detailed discussion had been held both at the FRA and at the County Council's Scrutiny committees. The Chairman commended officers for their work in pulling together the meetings in such a tight timescale.

High Rise Inspection Programme

3. The Department for Communities and Local Government has established a testing regime for cladding on all residential high rise buildings owned by Local Authorities or Housing Associations that were over 6 floors or 18m and had cladding fitted, following the tragic events of the Grenfell Tower in London. More than 600 buildings were identified across the country and the Building Research Establishment based at the Fire Service College has independently been undertaking the testing of the samples submitted by these Organisations. In addition Fire and Rescue Services were tasked with ensuring inspections of high rise buildings with cladding were undertaken. The Service has committed to ensuring the 47 buildings of more than 5 floors across the Service were visited by 7 July 2017 regardless of the fitting of cladding or not. These visits have been conducted by a Watch or a Fire Safety Officer and are designed to provide reassurance to residents. In addition to these visits Safe and Well visits are taking place following the identification of residents that fall within the Gold, Silver and Bronze risk stratification methodology.

Sprinkler Project

4. An extensive collaborative programme between SFRS and the social housing providers with properties across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, has been taking place over the last 18 months. There are approximately 35 social housing providers that have properties within Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, with a total of 81,500 properties between them.

The Community Sprinkler Project has risk assessed the 47 residential buildings consisting of 5 floors and above, within Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. A total of 1702 flats are contained within these buildings providing homes for approximately 2500 people. These 47 buildings identified are home to 629 people fitting within the '3 Tier Measures', 311 Gold, 155 Silver and 163 Bronze

As reported in the last Council report Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service in partnership with Bromford Housing has just completed the first phase of the Community Sprinkler Project at David Garrick Gardens, Bloomfield Crescent, Lichfield. These are the first high rise blocks of flats in Staffordshire to have sprinklers installed. The material work began in February 2017 and was completed in June. The cost of the sprinkler system will be £100,000 and SFRS will be contributing £50,000.

SFRS hosted the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association (BAFSA) Conference on 25 May 2017 and the Bromford Group presented this project, talking about the experiences, sharing good practice and learning points. Over 75 architects, planners, Local Authority Building Control and social housing providers attended. The Service had been contacted by other housing providers regarding the retrofitting of sprinklers. There were 6 high rise blocks in Tamworth. Stoke-on-Trent City Council had committed to retro fitting sprinklers in their 16 high rise blocks. The Service has a risk

based programme to work with the rest of the buildings over the next 10 years and budgets have been allocated.

An evaluation report undertaken by the National Fire Chiefs Council and the National Fire Sprinkler Network regarding the effectiveness of sprinklers showed that of the sprinkler activations analysed, 99% had proved effective and either contained or extinguished the fire.

The legislation in Wales now recognises the benefits of fitting sprinklers to domestic and residential properties. The Community Sprinkler Project is taking the initiative to demonstrate, educate and support communities as the potential changes in legislation in England have to date not been progressed.

At the Authority meeting on 13 July 2017 Mr Sweeney raised the following motion:-

“That in the light of the tragic events at the Grenfell Tower fire the Authority urges the Government to undertake a detailed review of all the circumstances surrounding the physical condition and the fire safety requirements for high rise apartments with a view to establishing a specific fire safety regime, national guidance and, where deemed necessary, legislation that will reduce the prospects in the future.”

This motion was seconded by Mr Clarke.

Members concurred with the motion and asked that the letter be sent to Theresa May, Nick Hurd and Amber Rudd.

PFI 1 & 2 Community Facility Use - Case Study – Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) – Leek Community Fire Station

5. From Leek Community Fire Station, Staffordshire Adventure Services - Moorlands Duke of Edinburgh Awards meet weekly with teenagers aged 13 - 18 who would like to participate and complete D of E Bronze, Silver & Gold. The aim of this is to give young people new skills combined with volunteering in the local community.

Staffordshire Adventure Services provides opportunities that are not possible through main stream education (ie. volunteering in the community and expeditions) which equip young people with life skills and a sense of wellbeing. The D of E staff run their meetings from the community fire station, they work with each person who attends to assist them in planning for their qualification and help them organise all the elements of work they need to complete in order to obtain the awards.

They appreciate the size of the space which enables the group to continuously increase their membership. The IT facilities are a great asset as they permit attendees to carry out research into their planned activity and update their work books online.

In addition to the above, the group are delighted that they have been able to forge a partnership with Moorlands Radio who also meet at Leek Community Fire Station. Young people are able to share their journeys “live on air” once they complete their Gold award which is another excellent experience. This is a brilliant example of how

groups can work together in the facilities and help each other to achieve their goals and enhance each others work.

Penkridge Official Opening

6. Penkridge's new Community Fire Station was officially opened during a special ceremony on Monday 12 June. CFO/CE Becci Bryant attended the celebration along with the Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority Cllr Stephen Sweeney, Station Manager Paul Cullen and local residents but the honour of opening the station was given to Betty Lloyd, Creator of Blaze Bear together with Jim Wright, a retired Firefighter from Penkridge.

The crew at the station asked for Betty and Jim to have the honour of opening the station as a thank you for their commitment and dedication to the local community. Following the ceremony guests were given a guided tour of the station, including the operational and community facilities.

Operational Incidents

Lichfield Waste Fire

7. Fire Control received the call at 7.20 pm on Tuesday 13 June with reports of a fire in a unit at Crossfields Industrial Estate in Lichfield. At the height of the incident, more than 60 firefighters attended the fire at the former GKN site which had been illegally filled with 5,000 tonnes of bailed waste. Thankfully only ten percent of the waste was involved in the fire.

This fire was contained very quickly thanks to safety measures and a multi-agency plan which was put in place by the Service and partners when the site was first identified. A fire investigation concluded the fire was started deliberately and the Service continues to work with the police.

Royal Stoke University Hospital

8. Fire Control received a call at 5.59 pm reporting a fire at Royal Stoke University Hospital on 7 June. The fire was in the main building of the hospital and crew used one breathing apparatus and one hose reel jet to put out the fire. Newcastle, Hanley, Longton and Stone crews attended the incident which at the height saw 30 firefighters assisting the hospital staff with their evacuation of the patients.

A fire investigation has found the blaze at Royal Stoke University Hospital was started deliberately. Staffordshire Police have arrested and charged a 39-year-old Sheffield man with two counts of arson with intent to endanger life.

S J Sweeney
Chairman

D M Jellyman
Vice Chairman